



Foggy Bottom News

Published for and by the citizens of Foggy Bottom

NOVEMBER 1985

Volume 30, No. 1

STAFF RECOMMENDS FB HISTORIC DISTRICT

As reported earlier, a hearing was held in September on our application for designation of a Foggy Bottom Historic District. Following is the draft report prepared by the staff for the Historic Preservation Review Board.

At press time, a final decision had not been made by the Board, but it is expected soon.

Application for Designation (Designation Case #84-8)

After careful consideration of the application to designate the Foggy Bottom Historic District, and following further staff research, it is our recommendation that the area shown on the attached map should be designated in the District of Columbia's Inventory of Historic Sites as the Foggy Bottom Historic District, and should be recommended for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

Landmark designation application #84-8, submitted by the Foggy Bottom Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2-A and the Foggy Bottom Association, seeks to designate an area composed of five squares in northwest Washington as the Foggy Bottom Historic District. The area is proposed for designation as an historic district for four reasons: 1) its association with Washington's early working class; 2) its geographic and sociological relationship with one of Washington's early industrial areas; 3) its position as one of the few neighborhoods associated with European immigrants in a city noted for its relative absence of European-American communities; and 4) the value of its vernacular architecture as a representation of the resources, tastes, and aspirations of these people.

The name "Foggy Bottom" has traditionally been applied to the area of the original city of Washington bounded by the White House precinct on the east, the floodplain of the Potomac River on the south, Georgetown on the west, and Pennsylvania Avenue on the north. This name is presumed to derive both from the area's geographical situation, on swampy bottom land along the Potomac, and from its industrial activity, which compounded the natural river fogs with clouds of smoke and soot.

Historically, Foggy Bottom was divided into two sections, an upper-income residential neighborhood to the east of 23rd Street, and a working class neighborhood and industrial area to

(continued on page 4)

Meeting Foggy Bottom Association

8:00 P.M.
NOVEMBER 25

Guest Speaker
Marion Barry, Jr.
Mayor
District of Columbia

St. Paul's Parish House
2430 K Street, N.W.

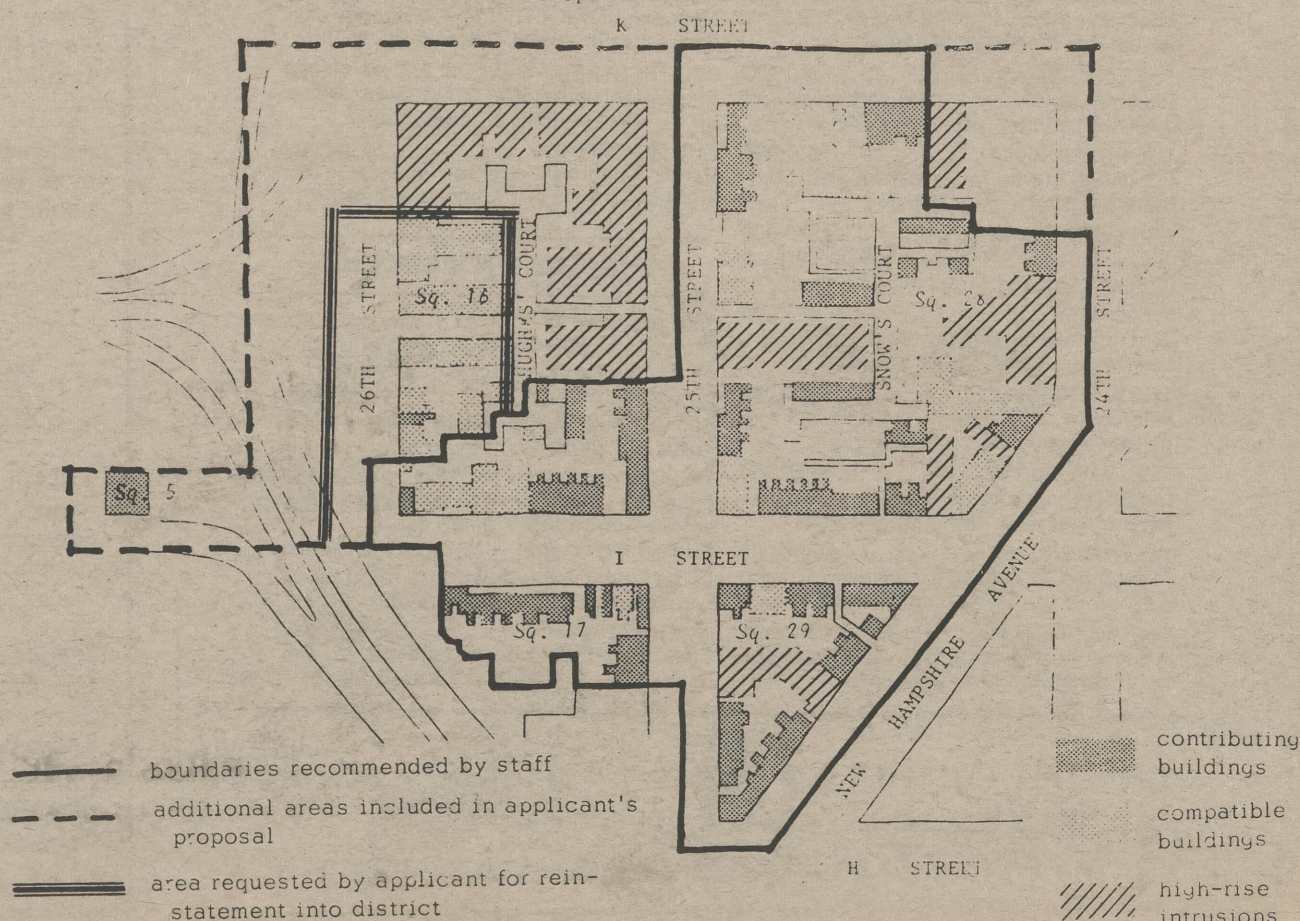
EAST END COMMITTEE MEETS

The first meeting of the Lower K Street East End Task Force, more popularly known as the "East End Committee," took place November 7 at St. Stephen's Church. The East End Committee is the second group set up by Mayor Barry to examine the impact of the redesign and projected reconstruction of the Whitehurst Freeway on the commercial areas and residential neighborhoods lying at either end of the Freeway. The two committees will in addition address broader traffic problems confronting the areas at the east and west ends of the elevated roadway. Finally, they are expected to propose practical solutions to existing problems and realistic ways to alleviate the effect on their neighborhoods of the probable increase in the stream of commuter traffic which the redesign/reconstruction project will generate along the Freeway.

In his opening remarks, Mr. C. Bernard Gilpin, Administrator of the Office of Policy and Planning of the District of Columbia Department of Public Works and Chairman of the East End Committee, stated the purpose of the East End Committee: to address area transportation problems and find practical solutions

(continued on page 7)

FOGGY BOTTOM HISTORIC DISTRICT
Proposed Boundaries



ANC Minutes November 12, 1985

Proposed chancery at 24th & Pennsylvania Avenue: Commissioner Rosenbaum reported that the Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA) concurred with the ANC's opposition, and rejected the application.


Proposed hotel on 2100 block of L Street: After 11 hours of testimony by the applicant and cross-examination by Commissioner Rosenbaum, this case continues. The Zoning Commission asked the applicant to alter its original ap-

plication for 40 rental apartments as an integral part of a hotel, and the applicant is now asking for a pure hotel. Applicant argues that a hotel is the only development that makes economic sense on the site, and a hotel will generate the greatest revenue for the D.C. government. The ANC approved funds to hire expert witnesses to counter these arguments and explore other uses for such sites, such as entirely rental housing.

Proposed GWU/Burns Medical Clinic expansion at 22nd

& I Streets: James Draude of the President Condominium reported that the BZA reconsidered the application, reversed its previous 2-2 vote to reject the project, and now approved the application by a vote of 3-1. The President will appeal to the D.C. Court of Appeals. Mr. Draude asked the ANC to make a further contribution to defray the heavy legal and administrative expenses incurred to date in pursuing the BZA cases, which involve zoning issues of broad neighborhood interest. There was discussion about whether the ANC could afford to commit additional funds, regardless of the issues, and still maintain adequate reserves. The ANC approved an additional \$2000.

Rick Striner reported on the formation of the D.C. Preservation Alliance of private non-profit organizations interested in preservation issues. The alliance is considering holding a city-wide preservation conference in 1986, and he urged the ANC to formally express its interest if it thought such a conference would be worthwhile. The ANC authorized its chairman to write to the alliance to support and encourage the idea.



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November 1985

Volume 30, No. 3

Foggy Bottom News

The *Foggy Bottom News* is a publication of the Foggy Bottom Association. All editorial and other assistance is contributed on a volunteer basis by residents of the area.

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 Donna St. John

All announcements, letters, articles, etc., welcome but must be typed **double spaced**. Please include an evening phone number. Send to:

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26th Street Tunnel Repaired

After several years of complaints, requests, and entreaties, the pedestrian tunnel at 26th and K Streets, N.W., has been repaired. The railings have been partially replaced, the steps have been fixed, and most of the lights have been reinstalled. In a letter to the FBA dated October 16, 1985, C. Bernard Gilpin of the Department of Public Works outlined what has been done. The missing tiles which once lined the tunnel have not been replaced because of the water seepage problem, Gilpin said, but the Department's designers are working on the problem. With respect to the community's repeated requests to improve the signal at 25th and K Streets, N.W., Gilpin stated that repair work had been ordered. He invited the FBA to review the proposed design.

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Staff Recommends...

(continued from page 1)

the west of 23rd Street. It is the area of the former working class neighborhood that this application addresses.

Historical Development

Soon after Washington's founding, one of the city's first industrial areas established itself along the river edge of Foggy Bottom. Among the ventures that began operations at this location were wharves, lime kilns, breweries, and a glass works. These industries were a primary determinant of the pattern of adjacent development, since they inevitably detracted from the desirability of the area for residential use.

Foggy Bottom was sparsely settled until the 1850s, when the area's population began to grow dramatically, along with that of the city as a whole. Unlike much of the city, however, Foggy Bottom began to evolve into a relatively homogeneous community composed of unskilled and working class residents. Many of these were recent European immigrants drawn by the proximity to jobs in the local industries.

The transition to an exclusively working class neighborhood paralleled an intensifying industrial use of the area. In 1856, for example, the Washington Gas Light Company established a storage and processing facility whose huge cylindrical tanks became local landmarks. By 1860, numerous other industrial establishments were in operation, including factories that produced lamp black, plaster, ammonia, and fertilizer.

After the Civil War, Foggy Bottom remained isolated from the city's growing public transportation system, and it was largely excluded from the advantages that Alexander Shepherd's public works program bestowed on much of north-west Washington. The residential neighborhood was dominated by close-knit communities of German and Irish extraction. These groups formed separate religious and social institutions, and traditionally segregated themselves even in the workplace, with the German immigrants working in the breweries, and the Irish for the Washington Gas Light Company.

The mid-nineteenth century also saw the emergence of another aspect of Foggy Bottom's physical development, the construction of alley dwellings. Alley dwellings began to appear in Washington about 1850 in response to shortages of inexpensive housing. The first alley dwellings were primarily shanties and sheds, but these were soon joined by more substantial frame and brick row houses. As the least desirable form of housing, alley dwellings were home to the city's poorest citizens, including many of the ex-slaves who migrated to the city after the Civil War.

Alley dwellings are documented in Foggy Bottom before 1860. By the end of the century, there were twelve inhabited alleys housing more than one thousand residents. The largest of these were Snow's and Green's alleys on Squares 28 and 16. Both of these retain some of their small

brick houses, which are included in the proposed district.

During the twentieth century, Foggy Bottom gradually lost its industrial establishments as a result of changes in the economy, the availability of better locations elsewhere, and even the effects of prohibition. As the industries disappeared, the ethnic communities dispersed as well. Large portions of the neighborhood were eventually transformed by the construction of high-rise apartment buildings, alley parking lots, highways, and urban renewal projects.

Physical Description

The portions of nineteenth century Foggy Bottom that remain still reflect their origins in the old working class residential community. Except for a single alley warehouse and a few structures built as corner stores, only row houses survive. They form a pleasing neighborhood of modest housing, varied within a limited range of types and styles. The buildings are usually two, but occasionally three stories in height. They are primarily flat-fronted brick structures, with simple, corbelled cornices and spare ornamentation, reflecting limited circumstances.

The buildings in the proposed district date primarily from the late 1870s to the 1910s, and reflect several stages of the neighborhood's economic development and gradual maturity. The earliest houses are individually constructed row houses built for their owners. Notable among these is a group of five buildings along 25th Street, including the frame house at the corner of 25th and I, which may have been associated with the underground railroad.

The individual row houses in Foggy Bottom were later joined by small groups of two or three attached houses built by area residents on speculation. These houses exemplify vernacular urban architecture, where the builders and craftsmen were often successful members of the community, building in direct response to their neighbors' needs. Several houses within the district were built by Peter McCartney, for example, a carpenter whose work is distinguished by a craftsman's skill in handling unpretentious design and materials.

The long blocks of flat-fronted, two-story row houses, generally built after 1885, represent the culmination of the vernacular tradition. These rows were built as speculative ventures by such firms as Dannenhower and Sons and B.H. Warner & Co. Within one block of each other in the Fog-

gy Bottom district are a dozen groups of row houses, both on streets and in alleys, built in blocks of four, six, or as many as sixteen units. Although some of these are attributed to Washington architects including Albert Beers and Norman Grimm, they are for the most part simple, repetitive interpretations of a stock vocabulary of architectural forms.

Two groups of these buildings, designed and built by the Burden family, are notable for their response to the ethnic character of the community. These houses offer interpretations of European vernacular design, with bellcast roofs, lancet windows, Flemish gables, and peaked lintels. Their picturesque compositions and medieval flavor stand in strong contrast to the sophisticated bay-fronted Victorian townhouses that was typical of most of Washington at the time.

Boundaries

The application for the Foggy Bottom Historic District seeks to designate an area generally within the following boundaries:

On the north, the center line of K Street; on the east, the center line of 24th Street and New Hampshire Avenue; on the south, the center line of H Street in the 2400 block, and the rear of properties fronting on I Street in the

2500 block; and on the west, the center line of the exit ramp from Interstate 66, with an extension across Interstate 66 to incorporate the three structures at the northeast corner of 27th and I Streets.

The staff recommends that the Foggy Bottom Historic District be designated with several reductions in the proposed boundaries, for the following reasons:

1) At the corner of 24th and K Streets, eliminate the property at the southwest corner of the intersection, and the adjacent apartment building immediately to the west on K Street. The buildings that formerly stood at this corner have been demolished, and a new high-rise apartment building is under construction. This new building and the existing high-rise apartment building to the west are historically unrelated to the district and will contrast strongly with its predominantly two- and three-story buildings.

2) On the west side of the proposed district, eliminate the three structures at the northeast corner of 27th and I Streets. Interstate 66 forms a barrier that completely isolates these three structures from the remainder of the proposed district. In addition, two of the three buildings have been significantly altered.

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3) On the west, eliminate the park land on the west side of 26th Street. All of the buildings that formerly stood on the west side of 26th Street have been demolished, and the present park area abutting Interstate 66 no longer shares a physical or functional similarity to the residential neighborhood in the proposed district.

4) On the west and north, eliminate all properties on Square 16 except for the properties fronting on I Street and in the southeast quadrant of the Square. The buildings in the northern part of Square 16 are high-rise apartment buildings dating from the 1950s through the 1980s. A number of nineteenth century buildings on the northwest quadrant of the Square were demolished subsequent to the filing of this application, and have been replaced by a new apartment building. The new buildings bear no historical relationship to, and contrast strongly in scale with the buildings in the proposed district.

The buildings along 26th Street and in the western half of Hughes' Court are compatible in scale with the district, but are either heavily altered nineteenth century buildings or modern structures that are unrelated to the working class housing that characterizes the proposed district.

(Note: During the hearing, witnesses requested that the compatible buildings on 26th Street and Queen Anne's Lane be reinstated as part of the historic district. The Board members appeared to agree with the request; we will know for sure when their decision is announced.)

Recommendations

The staff believes that the Foggy Bottom Historic District, as proposed in Designation Case #84-8, and with the modifications described above and shown on the attached map, qualifies as an Historic District that meets the criteria for designation adopted by the Historic Preservation Review Board. Specifically, the staff recommends that the District is worthy of designation on the District of Columbia's Inventory of Historic Sites for the following reasons:

1) It exemplifies significant economic, social, historical, and architectural heritage of the National Capital. Foggy Bottom is notable for its early association with the development of Washington's industrial history and with an immigrant working class lifestyle that endured into the twentieth century. The district demonstrates patterns of building, neighborhood structure, and speculative real estate development that were characteristic of many of the city's less prestigious residential areas during the latter half of the nineteenth century. As an illustration of the development of an ethnic working class community, it illuminates an unusual aspect of Washington's history not well represented by districts presently included in the Inventory of Historic Sites.

2) It embodies distinguishing characteristics of architectural styles and building types significant to the appearance and development of the National Capital. Foggy Bottom's row housing includes fine representative examples of vernacular architecture and crafts-

manship. These structures display a variety of individual forms, styles, and ornamental features within the overall framework of the dominant rowhouses building type of nineteenth and early twentieth century Washington. Unlike other districts including in the Inventory of Historic Sites, Foggy Bottom's housing stock is almost uniformly composed of the modest two-story dwellings built for the city's working class residents.

Further, the staff finds that the proposed district possesses sufficient integrity to convey, represent, and contain the values and qualities for which it is judged significant, and that sufficient time has passed since it achieved significance to permit its professional evaluation in its historical context.

The staff also believes that the Foggy Bottom Historic Dis-

trict as proposed in Designation Case #84-8, and with the modifications described above and shown on the attached map, meets the criteria of, and possesses the quality of significance present in other properties nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. The staff recommends that the Review Board recommend nomination to the National Register for the following reasons:

1) It is a significant and distinguishable residential neighborhood whose growth illustrates an important aspect of the social history and economic development of the Nation's Capital from the mid-19th century until World War I;

2) It retains significant representative examples of each period of its development, including a variety of vernacular row housing types characteris-

tic of Washington's working class neighborhoods;

3) It possesses sufficient integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association to convey the values for which it is judged significant.

David Maloney
Architect

Suzanne Ganschietz
Architectural Historian
September 6, 1985

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1985 Environmental Awards Presented at Convention Center

by William Matthews

On Friday, November 1, the Washington Convention Center was again the scene for the Environmental Awards Ceremony. Commercial, residential, parks and recreation and institutions were recognized for significant environmental improvements throughout the city through landscaping beautification efforts and elimination of litter. The themes for the 1985 ceremony were the mutual and shared responsibilities of government and citizens and the importance of involving young people in promoting interest and concern in the environment.

The ceremony was chaired by Ms. Mary Healy, Chairperson of the Mayor's Citizens' Advisory Committee for Neighborhood Beautification. She noted the increased number of commercial awards this year, saying it represented a growing momentum in environmental efforts and a greater awareness of their importance by the commercial community. She also expressed pleasure at the 90 grade school children present who represented schools which had participated in a District-wide School Poster Contest.

The Honorable Marion Barry, Jr., Mayor of the District of Columbia, addressed the awardees and the large crowd attending the ceremony. He noted with pride the renovation of the old downtown area of Washington as part of the larger beautification efforts under way in the city. He pointed with special pride to the proposed planting of 5,000 new trees in D.C. between now and next spring and observed that D.C. already has 100,000 trees in its large areas of public space. Mayor Barry also emphasized one of the themes of the 1985 ceremony — the citizens' responsibility — as well as the city's. He reminded those present that it is people who litter the streets and sidewalks. It is their responsibility, as well as the city's, to prevent and pick up litter, to maintain trash receptacles and tree boxes and to do anything else they can to promote the beauty of their city.

Bob Levey, of *The Washington Post* and WJLA-TV, was the feature speaker. Mr. Levey told of his own personal efforts at litter prevention in his area of the city. He also told of the sometimes humorous responses received after he suggested in his column that joggers should help pick up trash. He observ-

ed that the usual citizen's response to litter control is that "they," meaning the city, will do it. He emphasized that the watchwords should really be, "... they is us." He said it was everybody's responsibility and thanked Ms. Healy and the Committee for leading the way.

Councilmember Nadine Winter, who also chairs the Council's Public Works committee (and was the recipient of a "Residential" award), spoke of

current efforts to enforce the anti-litter regulations of the city and of the remarkable cooperation between the Committee and the city's Public Works Department. Anne Witt Hoey of Public Works had earlier described some of that Department's work, noting that two full-time staff persons were assigned to work with the Beautification Committee as part of the Department's commitment to that Committee's work. She urged award winners to "Show Off!", to wear their blue ribbons and to be proud of their contributions and their city.

The presentation of awards

in the several categories was led by Mayor Barry and covered a wide and diverse range of recipients. In Foggy Bottom, the Embassy of Saudi Arabia and St. Mary's Court received awards in the "Institutions" category for their gardens. Bruce Marshall of the St. Mary's Court staff accepted the award for St. Mary's Court. The National Capital Area Parks personnel received special thanks for their efforts throughout the city, including Foggy Bottom, and received their awards as a group. The Hotel Bristol, a new enterprise in Foggy Bottom, was an awardee in the commercial category.

Mrs. Mary Brewster received an unusual award for her nearly single-handed efforts in restoring and improving a small park space on 26th Street in Foggy Bottom.

Other Foggy Bottom winners were Benita Belden, Debbie Shacter and Roger Neece, George Young, Watergate East, the Lenkin Company, Potomac Plaza Cooperative, Plaza Condominium Apartments, and St. Mary's Court Art Class.

Framed paintings by St. Mary's Court's George Young were presented as prizes in the children's poster contest.

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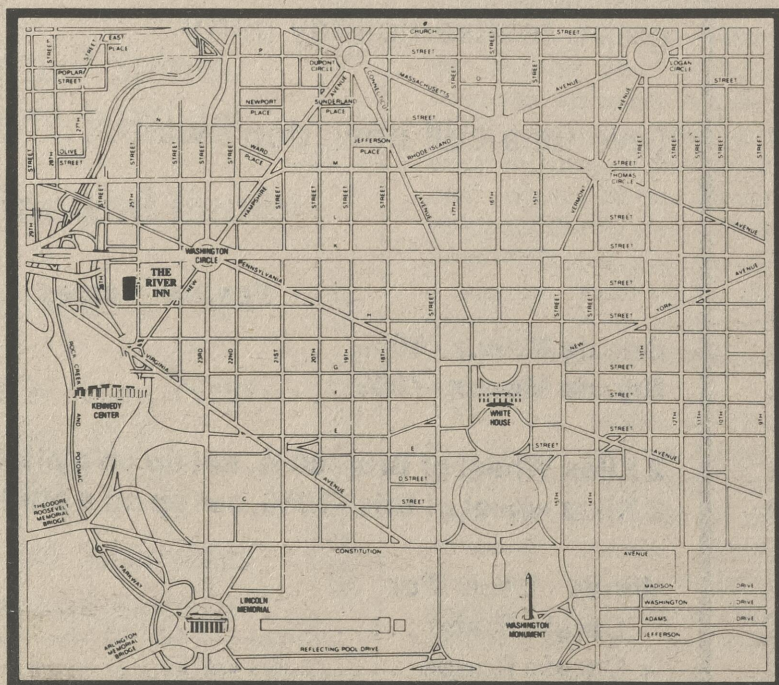
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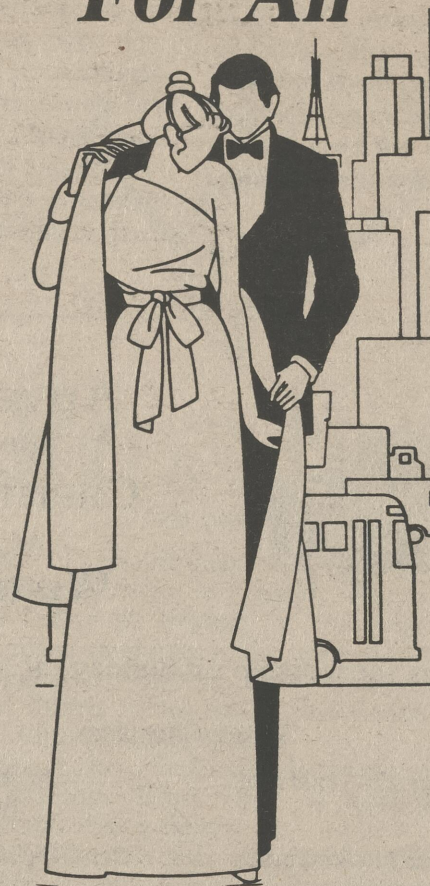
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GWU to Present Messiah Sing-Along

The annual performance of The George Washington University Singers' Winter Concert and "Messiah" Sing-Along, under the direction of Catherine J. Pickar, is scheduled for Friday, December 6, at 8 pm, in the Dorothy Betts Marvin Theatre.

Members of the university community and friends from the Foggy Bottom neighborhood are invited again this year to participate in the performance of Handel's "Messiah" either in the chorus or in the orchestra.

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East End

(Continued from p. 1)

to them. He declared further that it was not the committee's purpose to re-visit the Whitehurst Freeway redesign decisions which have been made by the District Government. He noted that the city has already begun the detailed design and engineering work required to carry out the decisions made several months ago. Mr. Gilpin also stated that the East End Committee was not assembled to discuss the construction of a tunnel from Washington Circle to 26th and K Streets to carry the stream of Whitehurst Freeway commuter traffic through Foggy Bottom and the West End, nor to examine the possibility of a depressed roadway to accomplish that same objective. He noted that both those projects, while perhaps desirable from the viewpoint of noise and pollution, were much too expensive to be considered in the context of the projected rehabilitation of the Whitehurst Freeway and for that reason had been rejected by the Mayor after careful consideration. Mr. Gilpin urged the members of the Committee to begin identifying traffic problems in the Foggy Bottom/West End area which can be addressed realistically within the constraints of the Department of Public Works budget and which can be resolved reasonably quickly.

Next ANC Meeting
December 10, 1985
7:30 p.m.
St. Mary's Court

Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony at Columbia Hospital for Women

It's time to deck those halls and hang the mistletoe with the holiday season just around the corner. To kick off this festive season, the staff and management of Columbia Hospital for Women Medical Center would like you, our Foggy Bottom friends and neighbors, to join

us for our annual tree lighting ceremony.

This traditional event will be held Wednesday, December 18 at 5:15 PM on the front terrace of the hospital, located at 2425 L Street, N.W. All you have to bring is your Christmas spirit; we'll provide the refreshments.

And please bring the kids, because Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus will be on hand to help us light the tree. So be good for goodness' sake, and please join us on December 18th.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

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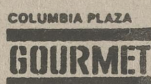
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Crimewatch

by Bob Alcorn

It is very rewarding for me to go around the neighborhood and notice all the new orange and black neighborhood watch signs. Let's keep it up; perhaps by the end of the next season we will have most of our streets covered.

We just received the reports for crime in September and theft from cars is still very high on the list. Readers, take heed. Be more careful with your belongings. We found that most of the cars robbed this time belonged to people living in the area, not tourists or students.

I am very pleased to hear from so many of you concerning crimes or possible crimes. More of you are noticing strangers walking about our area and suspicious people lurking in or near some of our biggest apartment complexes. To top it off, you not only alert the local people, but also you have been calling me to tell me so that I might alert others. My special thanks this month go to people living at the Shoremede and at 925 25th Street. We appreciate all your help in alerting the police and others to unusual people and happenings around you.

We have been made aware of a new brand of thievery. A number of the apartment buildings in the area have reported the theft of bedding plants from their yards and gardens. Mums are very popular and it would seem that someone is interested in getting the better plants for resale. It only takes a few minutes for someone to dig up a plant, pot it, and run off with it. But it is very hard to catch such a person as the thefts seem to happen late at night.

According to the latest reports of the police department, the most frequent time for crime to occur in our area is between 5 and 8 pm (at dusk). Those of you who were at the Foggy Bottom Association meeting on the 28th heard Sgt. Dowling talk about robbery times and warn us particularly about this time. So many of you are coming home at that time so be careful if you cut through back areas lest someone fall on you.

I am seeing a number of old women carrying those little plastic change purses showing to all who care to see a wad (big or small) of money and coins.

Try to keep those in your purses, ladies. These change purses are a real lure for the pick-pocket or small-time thief. He sees what you have without any work. At the same time the gentlemen are not home free. They often carry wallets showing credit cards in great rows and then open them in a shop, take out one dollar and then tuck them back into a back pocket or a coat pocket. You too can be a target for the quick time artist. Before you can shake a stick, your cards can be gone.

In talking to managers and residents in the apartment houses in our area, I am still finding that people are letting strangers walk in behind them. Those of you who have had robberies in your buildings know what can happen when you let a total stranger follow you into the building. Those of you who have been lucky or who live in a building that has not had a robbery can consider yourself very fortunate indeed. If you let someone in, you not only open yourself to jeopardy but also set up the rest of the residents in your building.

Remember, neighbors, organize your blocks, get your block captains set up and get your signs. Keep up the good work. See you at the next Foggy Bottom and ANC meetings?

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